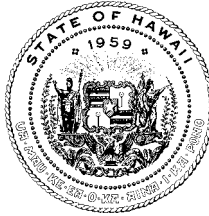


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KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

Watershed Partnerships

Peter T. Young, Chairperson
Board of Land and Natural Resources
Commission on Water Resource Management

Forested lands cover 1.5-million acres, or more than one-third of our state. These forests are our islands' primary watersheds.

Hawaii's forested watersheds are the source of our clean water, home to native plants and animals, the foundation of the Hawaiian culture and cornerstone for our quality of life. The forested watersheds are essential to our basic physical survival on these islands.

Water has long been recognized as the most important resource of Hawaii's forest lands. Forested watersheds reduce the rain's erosive effects, defend against flood and drought, prevent soil from washing into the ocean, protect the health of our reefs and beaches, increase infiltration rates into the soil, strip moisture from the clouds and deliver a dependable source of surface and artesian water.

Forested watersheds perform four basic and crucial functions. The first is that of an umbrella. Tree leaves, branches and understory plants intercept rain before it reaches the ground. This reduces the rain's erosive capacity and increases the infiltration of the rain water into the ground.

The second function forested watersheds perform is that of a soil anchor. The roots of the trees and associated plants grip the steep mountains tenaciously, preventing soil from washing into the ocean. This protects our ocean reefs and marine life.

Third, the forested watershed acts as a sponge, soaking up rainfall into its soil, roots, mosses, ferns and leaves. When they are all fully saturated they slowly release water, long after the rain has fallen.

The fourth function of a forested watershed is that of a pump. Plants use water, which is released back into the atmosphere through evapotranspiration (when water on/in plants evaporates or secretes through their leaves.)

We need to be mindful of the strong interconnected, interrelated and interdependent relationships that exist in nature.

Some call it ecosystem-based stewardship; to the Hawaiians, this was exemplified in the ahupua'a (an ancient land division system with strips of land from the mountain to the sea supporting self-contained communities.)

The legacy of the mountain-to-sea management system and the application of ecosystem-focused sustainability continue today.

The Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) is a national leader in developing landscape-scale cooperative partnerships among private, county, state and federal entities to protect and manage forests.

DLNR provided the initiative and principal support for establishment of statewide watershed partnerships and successfully leveraged State dollars to obtain federal and private competitive grants for watershed management.

Watershed partnerships are at the heart of DLNR's overall conservation and watershed protection efforts and are essential to preserving Hawaii's unique landscapes and providing a fresh water supply.

The private and public watershed partnerships that have been developed in Hawaii are a model for stewardship and resource conservation for the nation.

Watershed partnerships are voluntary alliances of public and private landowners committed to managing large areas of forested watersheds to protect the environment and insure fresh water supplies for future generations.

Forty private landowners and organizations, and twenty-four public agencies now support the nine watershed partnerships comprising almost 1-million acres of land (approximately one-fourth of the land area of the State of Hawaii.)

Governor Lingle, in 2003, signed a Memorandum of Agreement forming the Hawaii Association of Watershed Partnerships, putting the independent partnerships under a single umbrella organization.

Watershed partnerships capitalize on four approaches that are working to generate public and private support and maximize their positive impact:

- They operate at a landscape scale that seeks to manage the health of entire natural systems;
- They are implemented using science-based management plans to achieve their goals of watershed and habitat protection;
- They are voluntary alliances - partners participate because they want to and see the benefits of their efforts; and
- They are private/public partnerships bringing government and the private sector together to leverage resources.

These partnerships focus on resource protection that looks beyond ownership and boundary lines. In fact, boundary lines are "blurred" and protection measures are placed where most appropriate, rather than simply along ownership lines.

In order to protect the resources, watershed partnerships are employing field crews across the state to manage the greatest threats to our forest resources - feral animals, predators, weeds and other invasive species.

Invasive species are major threats to our watersheds and native species throughout the state and across the nation.

Fighting invasive species, and thereby protecting the watershed, is DLNR's number one priority because it is the single most effective way to protect Hawaii's natural resources.

DLNR's invasive species initiative is an integrated, multi-year, multi-million dollar program to prevent invasive species from entering Hawaii, control and eradicate invasive species already here, target research and expand public outreach.

Watershed protection also safeguards our native and endangered species. Unfortunately, Hawaii has been called the endangered species capital of the world and leads the nation in endangered species listings.

In dealing with this, DLNR is a national leader in seeking innovative solutions and partnerships to manage and recover endangered species.

DLNR's priority toward invasive species and work of the watershed partnerships are major factors in helping to recover endangered species in Hawaii.

The successful creation of the watershed partnerships has reinvigorated the historic cooperative partnership of public and private sectors in working together to protect essential forested watershed and the natural resources in Hawaii.

As a society we have a responsibility, and a practical need, to protect our water supply. Fresh water is not an unlimited resource, and its availability, quality and sustainability are linked to the health of our forested watersheds.

Hawaii Association of Watershed Partnerships

Kauai County

Kauai Watershed Partnership (142,000 acres)

Oahu

Koolau Watershed Partnership (99,000 acres)

Maui County

West Maui Watershed Partnership (50,000 acres)

East Maui Watershed Partnership (100,000+ acres)

Leeward Haleakala Watershed Partnership (26,000 acres)

Lanai Watershed Partnership (20,000 acres)

East Molokai Watershed Partnership (19,000 acres)

Hawaii County

Olaa-Kilauea Partnership (420,000 acres)

Kohala Watershed Partnership (32,000 acres)

How DLNR is supporting the Watershed Partnerships:

- State Natural Area Partnership Program - \$1.0 million
- State Forest Stewardship Program - \$500,000
- Watershed partnership funding, watershed cost share projects - \$1.6 million
- USFWS Landowner Incentive Program - \$1.1 million
- U.S. Forest Service Forest Lands Enhancement Program - \$80,000
- DLNR is in the process of taking over the U.S. Forest Service Forest Legacy Program that provides federal grant money for conservation easements. \$2-3 million annually.
- DLNR is working with USDA to begin a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program under the USDA Farm Bill that will provide funding for restoration for riparian areas and degraded forest lands. \$75 million over 15 years.